

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

1

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

----- X

December 7, 2021
Start: 1:05 p. m.
Recess: 2:39 p. m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 3)

B E F O R E: Hon. Peter Koo, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joseph C. Borelli
Justin L. Brannan
Selvena N. Brooks-Powers
Fernando Cabrera
Darma V. Diaz
Eric Dinowitz
James F. Gennaro
Mark Gjonaj
Robert F. Holden
Mark Levine
Francisco P. Moya
Kevin C. Riley
Carlina Rivera
Eric A. Ulrich
James G. Van Bramer

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Gabrielle Fialkoff,
Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks
and Recreation

Margaret Nelson,
Deputy Commissioner for Urban Park Service and Public
Programs at the New York City Department of Parks and
Recreation

Matt Drury,
Director of Government Relations at the New York City
Department of Parks and Recreation

Sherrise Palomino,
Director of Advocacy and Programs at New Yorkers for
Parks

Neile Weissman,
Head of Complete George

Jessica Burke,
President at Friends of Crocheron & John Golden Park

Michael Schnall appearing on behalf of:
David Ludwig
Senior Director of Community Programs & Governmental
Affairs at Asphalt Green

David Small
Red Hook Resident

Jacqueline (Jacqui) Painter,
Founder of Red Hook Relief

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

COMMITTEE ON PARKS AND RECREATION

[BLANK]

2 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Pc recording has started.

3 SERGEANT LEONARDO: Cloud is rolling.

4 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Thank you.

5 SERGEANT PEREZ: Back... Back up is rolling.

6 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Thank you, and good afternoon,
7 and welcome to today's remote New York City Council
8 Hearing of The Committee on Parks and Recreation.

9 At this time, would all council members and
10 council staff please turn on their video?

11 To minimize disruptions, please place all
12 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode.

13 If you wish to submit testimony, you may do so at
14 testimony@council.nyc.gov, once again, that is
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

16 Thank you, Chair Koo, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: [**GAVEL**]

18 Thank you for joining our virtual hearing today
19 before the council's Committee on Parks and
20 Recreation.

21 I would like to acknowledge my fellow council
22 members on their presence. We have Council
23 Members... One second. We have Council Member
24 Rivera, Council Member Diaz, and Council Member
25 Riley, and Council Member Holden.

2 Good afternoon, I am Peter Koo, Chair of the
3 Committee on Parks and Recreation. And, I would like
4 to welcome all of you to this public hearing, which
5 will examine answers to the Parks Department
6 recreational programs and facilities.

7 Today, The Parks Department operates and thirty-
8 six recreational centers throughout the five
9 boroughs. They offer services ranging from indoor
10 pools and weight rooms to basketball courts, dance
11 studios, boxing rings, art studios, game rooms,
12 afterschool programs, and even libraries.

13 Recreation centers offer a wide range of programs
14 as well, such as aerobics, tai chi, fencing, dancing,
15 theater, and sculpture. And, each center is equipped
16 with staff that provides, organizes, and prepare
17 activities for all age groups.

18 The city has long realized the value of promoting
19 physical activity to encourage healthy living among
20 all groups of New Yorkers.

21 At today's hearing, we will examine the overall
22 state of the Parks Department recreation centers when
23 it comes to maintenance, programmatic offerings,
24 accessibility, and members safety during the COVID-19
25 pandemic.

2 The Parks Department has operated recreation
3 centers since the turn of the 20th century. They are
4 a hallmark of the progressive history of the city,
5 and its efforts to provide opportunities to all of
6 its residents.

7 The city should take every reasonable step we can
8 to encourage more participation in physical activity
9 and other types of recreation.

10 Recreation centers are one of the major vehicles
11 at the city's disposal towards promoting and
12 encouraging physical activities and other types of
13 recreation.

14 Recreation centers are open all year round, and
15 during inclement weather or the winter months
16 recreation centers offer consistent opportunities for
17 social interactions and recreation to many of the New
18 Yorkers who could be isolated otherwise. It is
19 therefore critical that the city do all it can to
20 promote its recreation centers and ensure that they
21 are well-staffed and maintained so that more and more
22 New Yorkers can make use of them.

23 It is important that Parks has a plan to keep
24 recreation centers open and keep members safe during
25 the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 Membership and attendance rates have also varied
3 over the years. In 2011, the membership rates at
4 recreation centers were essentially doubled in order
5 to close a \$2.4 billion budget gap. The adopted plan
6 consisted of adults paying \$150, up from \$75 for
7 centers with pools, \$100, up from \$50 for centers
8 without pools, and seniors paid \$25, up from \$10.
9 Children 18 and under continue to have free
10 admission.

11 In 2016, the council passed Local Law 18 to
12 address concerns about the high fees and declining
13 attendance in membership rates, which created
14 discounted membership tiers and fees for youths under
15 18, seniors, disabled persons, and veterans. This
16 resulted in an almost immediate uptick in attendance.

17 However, the most recent numbers indicate that
18 membership and attendance numbers fell from fiscal
19 year 2017 to the current one.

20 For example, attendance fell from 3.4 million in
21 2017 to 1.9 million in 2020 while membership fell
22 from 161,000 in 2017 to 142,000 in 2020.

23 The recent pandemic has had a significant impact
24 on attendance and memberships, especially since
25

1 recreation centers were closed in March 2020 to keep
2 them safe from exposure to the virus.
3

4 Additionally, there have been concerns over the
5 years regarding the maintenance and upkeep at some
6 recreation centers.

7 Nearly half of the city's recreation centers were
8 built prior to 1950, which is now resulting in
9 weakening infrastructures at certain facilities, and
10 moreover facilities have not received renovations
11 since they were constructed. This is causing
12 recreation centers to close for renovations. For
13 example, the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center in
14 Greenwich Village closed in July of this year.
15 Flushing Meadows Corona Park Aquatic Center, which
16 opened in 2008, closed last year for renovations.
17 And, six pools in recreation centers throughout the
18 city have also been closed for renovations.

19 However, recreation centers are once again open
20 to the public for recreation use, and Parks have
21 offered, for a limited time, free memberships to
22 residents who signed up between September 7th and
23 December 31st of this year.
24
25

2 The free membership will last for one year from
3 the date the individual signs up. Members have
4 access to facilities citywide.

5 I am eager to explore an update on attendance and
6 memberships at recreation centers and what else Parks
7 is doing to incentivize members of the public to use
8 those facilities after their reopening.

9 I would also like to explore how Parks maintains
10 and upgrades these facilities so that New York City
11 residents can take advantage of our recreational
12 facilities and maintain a healthier lifestyle.

13 Also, the committee wants to ensure that our
14 recreation centers must have resources they need to
15 maintain their level of service and are able to grow
16 in the long-term.

17 So many New Yorkers rely on the Parks and
18 Recreation centers for the services and programs that
19 they offer. So, we have put forward every effort to
20 maintain a dynamic recreational environment for
21 current and future generations of New Yorkers.

22 I look forward to discussing these issues at
23 today's hearing and examining what other
24 possibilities are out there for improving resources
25 for our parks. Thank you.

2 We are also joined by Council Members Gennaro,
3 Gjonaj, Council Member Cabrera, Council Member
4 Dinowitz, Council Member Rivera, and Council Member
5 Holden.

6 I will now turn you over to our moderator,
7 Committee Counsel Kris Sartori to go over some
8 procedural items.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Koo, I'll m
10 Kris Sartori, Senior Counsel to the Committee on
11 Parks and Recreation, and I'll be moderating this
12 hearing.

13 Before we begin, I'd like to remind everyone that
14 you will be on mute until you are called on to
15 testify, at which point you will then be unmuted by
16 the host.

17 During the hearing, I will be calling on panelist
18 to testify, so please listen for your name to be
19 called, as I will periodically be announcing who the
20 following panelists will be.

21 We will first be hearing testimony from the Parks
22 Department followed by testimony from members of the
23 public.

24 During the hearing if council members would like
25 to ask a question of the administration or of a

1
2 specific panelist, please use the Zoom Raise Hand
3 Function, and I will call on you in order.

4 Council member questions will be limited to five
5 minutes, including the time it takes to answer those
6 questions.

7 For members of the public, speaking time will be
8 limited to three minutes in order to accommodate all
9 who wish to speak today.

10 Once you are called on to testify, please begin
11 by stating your name and the organization you
12 represent if any.

13 I will now call on representatives of the
14 administration to testify. Appearing today for The
15 Department of Parks and Recreation will be Gabrielle
16 Fialkoff, Commissioner of the department, Margaret
17 Nelson, Deputy Commissioner for Urban Park Service
18 and Public Programs, and Matt Drury Director of
19 Government Relations.

20 And, at this time I will administer the
21 affirmation to each representative of the Parks
22 Department. I will call on each of you individually
23 for a response.

24 So, at this time, please raise your right hands.
25

1 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
2 and nothing by the truth, before this committee, and
3 to respond honestly to council member questions?
4

5 Commissioner Fialkoff?

6 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Yes.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

8 Deputy Commissioner Nelson?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

11 And, Director Drury?

12 DIRECTOR DRURY: Yes.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much.

14 At this time, I will invite Commissioner Fialkoff
15 and Deputy Commissioner Nelson to present their
16 testimony.

17 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Thank you.

18 Good afternoon, Chair Koo, members of The Parks
19 Committee, and other members of the council. I am
20 Gabrielle Fialkoff, The Commissioner for New York
21 City Parks.

22 I am thrilled to be here with you today, joined
23 by Margaret Nelson, our Deputy Commissioner for Urban
24 Parks Service and Public Programs, and Matt Drury our
25 Director of Government Relations.

2 Commissioner Nelson will be providing testimony
3 for today's specific topic, but as we approach the
4 end of this calendar year, this legislative session,
5 and this administration, I wanted to take a few
6 moments before to provide some thoughts on the
7 successes and challenges experienced by the agency.

8 First and foremost, I want to thank Chair Koo for
9 his leadership of this committee and for his
10 dedicated public service for New Yorkers, and offer
11 congratulations on an impressive career in the city
12 council. We have very much appreciated your advocacy
13 for parks and open space, and have enjoyed working
14 with you and your fantastic district and committee
15 staff in a productive spirit of partnership.

16 I also want to thank the other members of the
17 Parks Committee and other council members for their
18 service and for working alongside us towards our
19 shared goal of providing New Yorkers with the
20 wonderful parks system they need and deserve.

21 The council support for the agency including the
22 Play Fair Public Advocacy Campaign has been
23 tremendously beneficial in ensuring that the agency
24 has the resources it needs to get the job done.

2 Mayor de Blasio granted me an incredible
3 privilege in being able to lead this agency, and I
4 thank him for his strong commitment to making our
5 parks system more equitable, inclusive, and
6 resilient.

7 Most of all, I want to thank our incredible team
8 of dedicated parks staff who keep our parks safe,
9 clean, and accessible. Serving alongside them as
10 Commissioner is truly an honor.

11 These recent years have been challenging and
12 complicated times for the Parks Department as New
13 York continues to grapple with COVID and the new
14 normal created by the global pandemic. But, over the
15 course of this administration, New York City Parks
16 has had some tremendous achievements in proving parks
17 across the five boroughs and increasing access to
18 open space for all New Yorkers.

19 Dedication to equity and fairness has been a
20 strategic cornerstone of this administration and this
21 agency. My predecessor, Mitchell Silver, launched
22 the Community Parks Initiative at the start of this
23 administration's term targeting 318 million dollars
24 in investment towards 37 neighborhood parks that had
25

1
2 been under appreciated and disregarded for far too
3 long.

4 Upon my arrival, my top priority was making sure
5 that the legacy of that dedication to equity would
6 continue long past this administration, which is why
7 I was so proud to announce with Mayor de Blasio, that
8 the CPI Program will be extended and expanded with an
9 additional investment of 425 million dollars in new
10 administration funding -- which will completely
11 reimagine, redesign, and rebuild one-hundred
12 neighborhood parks across the city over ten years.

13 We were able to identify opportunities to create
14 new green and open space, with Parkland Acquisitions,
15 that pushed the total of city open space to over the
16 30,000 acre threshold.

17 Our Anchor Park Initiative revitalized flagship
18 parks throughout the boroughs. The Parks Without
19 Borders Program completely changed the way our parks
20 connect with neighborhoods that surround them. And,
21 our Cool Pools turned sixteen drab and unappealing
22 outdoor pools sites into vibrant opportunities for
23 all New Yorkers to enjoy a fun and cool summer
24 getaway.

2 With the support of the council and Mayor de
3 Blasio, over the course of this administration, the
4 city has invested close to 8 billion dollars in
5 capital improvements and renovations representing
6 well over 2,000 projects of ever shape and size,
7 creating new or improved playgrounds, comfort
8 stations, athletic fields and courts, seating areas,
9 dog runs, and waterfront amenities.

10 Our commitment to community is more than
11 revitalizing amenities; it's also providing vital
12 infrastructure to neighborhoods around the city so
13 they can survive and thrive.

14 In partnership with our fellow city agencies and
15 our state and federal partners, we're implementing
16 resiliency measures and shoreline protections plans
17 to combat climate change and severe weather.

18 We were able to complete The Million Tree
19 Planting Initiative two years ahead of schedule, and
20 the Cool Neighborhoods Program has provided over a
21 100 million dollars to protect our city's tree canopy
22 and plant trees in heat vulnerable neighborhoods,
23 which will save lives and make our neighborhoods more
24 pleasant and comfortable.

2 We have focused on creative and proactive
3 efforts, such as The City Cleanup Corps, which
4 leveraged federal COVID recovery funding to provide
5 the agency with 32 hundred new maintenance employees
6 to pick up litter, wipe away graffiti, maintain parks
7 and playgrounds offer tremendous value to our parks
8 and public spaces when they were in dire need.

9 We closely examined our Maintenance and
10 Operations Portfolio and brought on a chief operating
11 officer to oversee all the borough operations and
12 standardized best practices.

13 We designed a more data driven approach to manage
14 or finite resources and found more ways to improve
15 the longevity of our Parks' assets through preventive
16 maintenance.

17 In matched spirit of efficiency and
18 modernization, our capital team has worked tirelessly
19 to streamline agency driven processes and facilitate
20 projects that are on time and on budget.

21 Of course, there is still more to do, and our
22 agency will continue identifying ways to improve.
23 So we look forward to continuing that dialogue with
24 the council in the future.

2 Turning to the topic of today's hearing, our
3 recreation centers are an incredibly important part
4 of our agency portfolio making an incredible range of
5 free or low cost recreational, educational, and
6 cultural opportunities available to every New Yorker.

7 We have 36 recreation centers around the city,
8 and they are more than just gyms; they are spaces
9 where they community can gather, stay socially
10 engaged, develop new skills and hobbies, and of
11 course stay in shape and have fun.

12 We are dedicated to expanding access to the great
13 recreational programming we provide for as many New
14 Yorkers as possible. This means keeping our existing
15 centers in a state of good repair as well as
16 exploring any potential opportunities for new
17 facilities in communities that lack access to
18 recreational programming.

19 Like much city infrastructure, some of our
20 facilities are considerably older, and that certainly
21 creates some challenges. And, the construction of
22 new facilities is an expensive and complicated
23 undertaking. But, we are working to prioritize the
24 most pressing needs and identify the resources
25 necessary on a case by case basis.

2 During the course of this administration, the
3 agency has managed close to 70 capital projects at
4 our existing recreation centers worth 370 million
5 dollars. And, we've worked closely with DDC on
6 several new recreation center projects -- well over
7 600 million dollars of addition investment, including
8 the Ocean Breeze Athletic Complex, which opened to
9 the public in 2015.

10 I would now like to introduce Margaret Nelson,
11 our Deputy Commissioner for Urban Parks Service and
12 Public Programs, who will provide more information
13 about the value that our recreation centers are
14 providing for New Yorkers, and a useful overview of
15 our public programs and recreation efforts.

16 Thank you.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you so much.
18 Uhm, good afternoon, Chair Koo and members of the
19 Parks and Recreation Committee. I am Margaret
20 Nelson, Deputy Commissioner for Urban Parks Service
21 and Public Programs at the New York City Department
22 of Parks and Recreation.

23 Thank you for inviting us to testify today
24 regarding improving access to our recreational
25 programs and facilities.

2 We think it would be helpful to first provide
3 some broader context about the recreational and
4 programming aspects of our agency's mission.

5 The Recreation Unit at New York City Parks falls
6 under the umbrella of the Public Programs Division,
7 which is also comprised of a Products Media Education
8 and Education Wildlife, which includes our Urban Park
9 Rangers.

10 Recreation's mission is to enable all New Yorkers
11 to lead physically active and intellectually
12 stimulating lives through sports, fitness, outdoor
13 adventure, technology, education, and the arts.

14 Recreation centers are essential infrastructure
15 for communities, providing space to recreate, learn,
16 gather, and relax.

17 Citywide, we have 36 recreation centers, which
18 include our newest and largest building, as The
19 Commissioner just mentioned, the Ocean Breeze
20 Athletic Complex, it's a 135,000 square foot indoor
21 track facility that hosts over a 175,000 athletes at
22 approximately 80 competitions in a typical year. The
23 remaining 35 centers range in size, and are primarily
24 older facilities with an average center age of 66
25 years, the oldest having been built in 1900.

2 Many of our centers were originally designed to
3 serve other purposes such as libraries and bath
4 houses, and then were handed over for recreational
5 use and have thus experienced a great degree of heavy
6 use and wear and tear over their long lives.

7 Our centers offer a diverse range in both form
8 and function, 21 have gyms, 12, as you mentioned have
9 indoor pools, 12 feature outdoor pools.

10 Our recreation centers far exceed neighboring
11 commercial fitness facilities in terms of character,
12 culture, and community. They boast pools, gyms,
13 multi-purpose rooms, fitness rooms, media labs,
14 indoor tracks, cardio rooms, and classrooms, and our
15 loyal core staff provide an inclusive atmosphere not
16 often found and your typical private fitness center.

17 At New York City Parks, we seek to provide
18 lifelong, holistic enrichment nurturing New Yorkers
19 of all ages and abilities. We offer a wide variety
20 of programming from instructional sports to
21 competitive leagues, yoga to swimming, rooftop
22 stargazing to painting, Pickle Ball to Double Dutch,
23 chair aerobics to Zumba, concerts to lectures, roller
24 skating to advanced Adobe Design Software

2 certification training, and many more opportunities
3 for engagement.

4 Additionally, we provide youth of New York City
5 an opportunity to learn, grown, and develop skills
6 and interests through programs like swim teams,
7 afterschool summer camp, and adaptive recreation for
8 people with disabilities.

9 Creating these types of life changing, soul
10 enriching opportunities is our focus and is what we
11 do best. We further expand our ability to make these
12 opportunities available to all by working with
13 partner organizations to provide specialty
14 programming for New Yorkers, collaborating with such
15 groups as The Public Theater, The Jazz Foundation of
16 America, The New York Red Bulls, Madison Square
17 Garden, and the New York Jets.

18 As previously mentioned, we also offer
19 opportunities for New Yorkers to enrich their
20 interests and skills in media and technology, which
21 is so important in these modern society and economy.
22 The Media Education Unit of Public Programs provides
23 high quality digital resources and creative learning
24 opportunities in 33 media labs within recreation
25 centers -- including certification programs for

2 Microsoft Office, video editing and storytelling,
3 photography, and steam aligned classes offering 3-D
4 imaging and robotics.

5 Within the walls of our recreation centers, we
6 offer thousands of individual programs to
7 approximately 140,000 recreation center members. In
8 addition to programs, our recreation center members
9 have access to over 1,300 pieces of fitness equipment
10 that provide excise and wellness opportunities in
11 countless combinations.

12 But, in New York City Parks, we don't let bricks
13 and mortar limit our ability to provide programming,
14 and we have a plethora of offerings for all audiences
15 throughout the city, well beyond the confines of our
16 recreation centers.

17 Our mobile recreation programs, including the
18 Play Mobile and Fitness Mobile, allow us the ability
19 to visit various community events from April through
20 October, and bring these recreational opportunities
21 directly to New Yorkers, reaching over 25,000 people
22 each season.

23 One of our most popular mobile programs is Movies
24 Under the Stars program. This annual summer movie
25 series, hosted in partnership with The Mayor's Office

1
2 of Media and Entertainment, grants us the opportunity
3 in a typical year to show over 400 movies in our
4 local parks.

5 By partnering with private organizations, we have
6 also been able to offer New Yorkers the chance to
7 take part in our Arts, Culture, and Fun program
8 series throughout the five boroughs including tango
9 classes in Washington Square Park, Jazz concerts in
10 Harlem, and Taikoza drumming performances in Queens.

11 We also offer outdoor programming in our parks
12 that is specifically tailored to youth through our
13 Kids in Motion and Summer Sports Experience Programs.
14 Kids in Motion engages children in active outdoor
15 play. In a typical year, this program is hosted at
16 approximately 100 sites citywide and has over 470,000
17 visits.

18 Similarly, The Summer Sports Experience program
19 teaches sport skills, capturing an audience of young
20 athletic enthusiasts who are interested in further
21 developing their skills. On average, that program
22 sees 34,000 visits a year.

23 Another successful program for children, The
24 Puppeteers Program, has a home stage in the Swedish
25

1
2 Cottage in Central Park and offers free mobile puppet
3 performances and puppet making workshops citywide.

4 Though youth programming is a priority for New
5 York City Parks, we know that recreational
6 opportunities are just as important for adults and
7 seniors. Our Signature Fitness and Wellness program
8 that targets adults and seniors, is the Shape Up NYC
9 programming.

10 Leveraging financial support from Empire Blue
11 Cross Blue Shield and private donors, Shape Up NYC
12 provides free fitness programming in our parks,
13 recreation centers, and beyond in locations
14 throughout the city. Since the program began in 2003,
15 it has received over one million visits, which is an
16 incredible success. This program also features a
17 train the trainer component, where members of the
18 public have the ability to become trained fitness
19 instructors.

20 As you can hear, our recreation unit prides
21 itself on offering a wide variety of programing to
22 people of all ages, abilities, and interests. For
23 that to be possible, we need to sustain our
24 recreation facilitates ensuring that they are in the
25

2 best condition possible, which we monitor with
3 specific regular processes and benchmarks.

4 Parks utilizes the agency's Asset Management
5 Parks System to request repairs and track maintenance
6 and routine operational information. Over and above
7 the daily monitoring, provided by our centers' staff,
8 to continually monitor the state of our recreation
9 centers, they are also inspected twice a year for
10 safety, cleanliness, and structural condition via the
11 Recreation, Evaluation and Center Assessment Program.
12 These inspections are independently administered by
13 the agency's Operations and Management Planning
14 Division similar to how they conduct the agency's
15 parks inspection program.

16 While we cannot simultaneously address the myriad
17 of capital projects necessary to keep aging
18 facilities in tip top shape, we do invest the time
19 and resources with care in order to better serve New
20 Yorkers.

21 To help improve the physical condition of our
22 centers we routinely focus on quicks wins, small but
23 impactful improvements implemented to improve the
24 quality of our recreation centers and to enhance the
25 experience of our members.

2 Projects have included targeted facility
3 improvements, improvements to a specific room of a
4 center, or new equipment purchases. But, beyond the
5 everyday maintenance conducted by our staff, many of
6 our recreation centers have received part of that 370
7 million dollars, \$11.9 of which is council funded --
8 so, thank you to all of the members who have given us
9 funding for our rec centers -- of capital investment
10 during the current administration, to address
11 structural and mechanical deficiencies, upgrade fire
12 alarms, and bring buildings up to a state of good
13 repair.

14 In order to properly assess all of our buildings'
15 needs, starting in 2019, an in house technical
16 inspection team from Parks Capital Projects Division
17 began to conduct a thorough assessment of each
18 centers' capital needs, collecting the condition data
19 according to a standardized protocol that allows for
20 capital project prioritization and long-term capital
21 planning. To date, we have assessed nine building
22 using this process. Using the analysis, we have
23 worked with OMB to address issues identified. For
24 example, we recently secured 20.7 million dollars to
25 address an old and leaking roof that was causing

2 water damage in one of these buildings -- Hamilton
3 Fish Recreation Center.

4 Additionally, we currently have approximately 45
5 active recreation centers renovation projects being
6 managed by our Capital and Citywide Services
7 Divisions, totally over \$334 million.

8 But, the needs of many of these centers are
9 significant, given their age, unique layouts not
10 intentionally designed for recreation... Uh, hold
11 on, I just lost my place here... recent storm and
12 heavy use, we are putting the tools in place to
13 properly prioritize and plan for the future, so they
14 can remain robust and vital amenities for the
15 communities they serve.

16 Our recreation centers have also provided
17 services to the community during the time... during
18 times of emergencies. During the COVID pandemic,
19 after recreation centers closed to the public, they
20 were temporarily repurposed to serve many emergency
21 functions such as food distribution that collectively
22 distributed over 42 million meals, COVID testing and
23 vaccination sites, Learning Bridges sites in
24 coordination with DOE, and hubs for our staff to
25 distribute masks to the public.

2 In addition to providing these essential services
3 to our community, our staff served as Social Distance
4 Ambassadors educating park patrons about social
5 distancing and distributing face coverings. We also
6 provided outdoor programs near the recreation centers
7 as soon as it was deemed safe to gather.

8 I want to take the time to thank our staff who
9 reported to work throughout the pandemic and pivoted
10 their focus to emergency management. I am so
11 appreciative of their bravery, flexibility,
12 creativity, and commitment to our city. And, we
13 began opening recreation centers in June, and by
14 September, all centers that were not still serving
15 COVID related functions, or closed for renovations,
16 have reopened, I'm happy to say.

17 We're very happy to see New Yorkers once again
18 able to turn to our recreation centers for the
19 primary benefits they provide, improving our city's
20 health and wellness with incredible recreational
21 opportunities.

22 Our mayor recognized the importance of our
23 recreation centers and programs in his 2020 State of
24 the City Address by announcing a number of
25 initiatives not expand our reach: The elimination of

2 the \$25.00 annual membership for anyone under the age
3 of 24, the expansion of late nights and weekends
4 hours at our 36 sites, the completion of two
5 recreation centers already in the pipeline, and the
6 building of seven brand new recreation centers in
7 neighborhoods that currently lack them.

8 While the plan to increase the operating hours of
9 centers was put on hold due to COVID, the expansion
10 of the sites is moving forward. Over \$500 million is
11 being invested in five new recreation centers,
12 Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center in Brooklyn; Mary
13 Cali Dalton Recreation Center on Staten Island; Roy
14 Wilkins Park in Queens; and the neighborhoods of
15 Soundview and Tremont in The Bronx.

16 We successfully eliminated the \$25.00 annual
17 membership fee for everyone 24 and under and are
18 currently offering free memberships for anyone of any
19 age, who signed up before December 31st. So, make
20 sure to get the word out, and visit your nearest
21 center.

22 We are always looking for innovative ways to
23 increase our programming footprint, which I know is
24 one of the other focuses of this hearing. Recently,
25 three new field houses at Levy, De Matti, and

1
2 McDonald playground on Staten Island have been
3 completed and programming has begun. Our Parks at
4 home -- #ParksAtHome! -- Initiative was launched in
5 March 2020 to keep New Yorkers engaged during the
6 COVID-19 pandemic. Through this initiative, Parks
7 has delivered numerous educational, fitness, and
8 wellness programs over Facebook Live, Twitter, and
9 Instagram stories. Additionally, the Parks At Home
10 webpage, has served as a central hub to alert patrons
11 of upcoming opportunities.

12 In addition to our appreciation of the mayor, I
13 want to thank of the council members who are so
14 thoughtful in their appropriation of funding towards
15 our facilities and programming. This fiscal year, we
16 were allocated over \$685,000 in council member
17 discretionary funding towards programming, events,
18 and staff to public programs. We greatly appreciate
19 this funding and your continued advocacy and support.

20 In closing, we would like to reiterate the
21 positive impact that not only our recreation centers
22 but our entire recreation unit have made across the
23 five boroughs.

24 I would like to acknowledge particular the
25 flexibility and dedication of this incredible

1 recreation team, as they have consistently and
2 effectively navigated an ever changing landscape of
3 practical concerns, policy changes, and safety
4 considerations. Are staff worked tirelessly during
5 the height of COVID to continue to serve New Yorkers
6 in critical ways, and now they are creatively
7 bringing back programming that will engage kids, help
8 adults get fit, decrease social isolation for
9 seniors, and so much more. We strive to bring free
10 and low-cost accessible programing to all New
11 Yorkers. You each have a standing offer to join us
12 at any of our recreation centers or outdoor programs,
13 which I know many of you have.

14
15 And, thank you for the opportunity to share our
16 work with you as we serve New Yorkers focusing on
17 fun, health, and happiness. Our staff will be
18 watching the public's testimony via the council's
19 livestream, but in the meantime, we will now be happy
20 to answer any questions you might have.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. And, I will now
22 turn it to over Chair Koo for his questions.

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, Kris, yeah.

24 Uh, first of all, I want to thank, uh,
25 Commissioner Fialkoff, and Deputy Commissioner

1
2 Nelson, uh, to come here to testify and give us the
3 really detailed information about the recreation
4 centers.

5 Uh, we're also joined by Council Member Van
6 Bramer, Council Member Levine, Council Member Brooks-
7 Powers, Council Member Borelli, and Council Member,
8 uh, Ulrich.

9 Uhm, so, I guess I will start some, uh,
10 questions. Uhm, I don't know who will answer, either
11 Deputy Commissioner or the Commissioner can answer
12 all these questions.

13 Uh, so, what is the current capital allocation
14 for future recreation center projects and
15 renovations?

16 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Thank you, Chair Koo, for
17 your questions. Uhm, right now we do have five rec
18 centers, new rec centers in work for a cost of 500
19 million dollars. Uh, that is, uh, in partnership
20 with DDC. Uh, we also have... Well, I should say
21 during this administration, we have, uh, we have had
22 70 capital projects, uh, by the Parks Department in
23 terms of maintenance, uh, for our 36 rec centers.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Hmmm...
25

2 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Uh, that's for a total
3 370 million dollars. Uh, 23 of those projects are
4 complete, and 45 are, uhm, in work. And, then, on
5 top of that, we have our new rec centers, uh, five
6 new rec centers as Commissioner Nelson, uh, spoke
7 about, with a cost -- a budget -- currently of 500
8 million dollars.

9 But, Commissioner Nelson, if you'd like to expand
10 upon those numbers, please do.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: No, I think that
12 covers it. I think the only thing it doesn't cover
13 is Ocean Breeze, which was built during, uh, which
14 was finalized during this administration, which was
15 another 100 million dollar investment in recreation.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

17 So, can you please provide a status update on
18 each of the recreation centers that are currently
19 closed, and their timeline for reopening?

20 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Yes, I'll... I'll give
21 you an overview and then turn it over to, uh,
22 Commissioner Nelson... (Cross-Talk)

23 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Uh, we are pleased that
25 we have 28 of our rec centers open today. Uh, we

1
2 opened 12 in June of, uh, 2021, uhm, and then in
3 September, we were able to open the remainder of our
4 rec centers. Uh, we do have some right now closed
5 for construction -- five. We do have one that
6 sustained damage, uh, during Hurricane Ida. One that
7 serves as a COVID testing center, and another as a
8 vaccine center, which we are thrilled to still, of
9 course, be supporting the city, uh, in COVID relief.
10 But, as to when they're opening, and the progress,
11 I'll let, uh, Commissioner Nelson dig in.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you so much.

13 Uhm, so, and, again, I think it's... It's
14 important to keep in mind, I think as we all talked
15 about, that our whole portfolio of recreation
16 centers, because they're so old and need a certain
17 amount of capital work, that at any given time, you
18 know, ten years ago to now, they're always going to
19 be a certain number of our recreation centers that
20 are closed for capital construction. And, I think
21 even though we try to minimize the amount of time
22 centers are closed and try to do, you know, see if we
23 can do some partial phasing so that we can keep some
24 of the centers open, or do work while its open, that
25 it's a symbol of our investment, and wanting to keep

1
2 these centers kind of functioning for the next
3 generation by doing this investment, which does lead
4 to some closures of some rec centers, uh, you know
5 during the course of any given year.

6 So, right now, uhm, the Von... Herbert Von King
7 center in Brooklyn is currently closed for
8 construction. And, we are looking at a completion
9 and a reopening, uh, this coming spring/summer. Uhm,
10 so that's great.

11 Uh, Tony Dapolito, which I think you mentioned,
12 uh, Chair Koo, in your testimony, again that's an
13 example of a very, uh, old and aging and well-loved
14 recreation center that we've started to do some work
15 on that was an exterior project. We were keeping the
16 center open while we were doing that project, but in
17 the course of that project, uncovered some structural
18 issues that needed to be addressed. So, that,
19 unfortunately was a... kind of an unanticipated
20 closure. But, the good news is that we've done
21 probes. We've identified, uh, with the design
22 consultant what the issues are. We were able to move
23 some money around from the administration to cover
24 the increase costs, and that... that is in progress.
25 And, we're hoping, to be able to reopen, kind of

1
2 shore up this structural issue, reopen the center
3 temporarily, and, you know, then have to close it
4 again. So, that's... That's an example of like what
5 happens when there's been a lot of kind of deferred
6 maintenance, and now, once we get in to a building
7 sometimes we uncover more than we thought we were
8 getting in to. So, that, again, uh, we're hoping to
9 have that reopen for a partial reopening, uhm, this
10 spring/summer. Uhm, and then there's going to be a
11 phase two of that project, uh, that we're going to
12 start design on in, uhm, that's going to probably
13 cause another closure for that construction project.

14 Uh, Flushing Meadows, uh, Aquatic Center, which
15 you also mentioned, again this is a... a relatively
16 new center, uh, and what happened is that there have
17 been issues with the roof. So, we had to close the
18 center to put up some temporary netting. We're
19 hoping to open that early in the new year, while the
20 design for the kind of full renovation of the roof to
21 figure... to address the spalling conditions. So,
22 it will reopen in the... in January, February,
23 sometime early in the New Year; we will keep it open
24 until that larger project starts, which is yet to be
25 determined.

2 Uhm, Pelham Fritz, uh, is closed. That's in
3 Manhattan. Uh, we're renovating the storefront.
4 That was a planned project. Uhm, and that should be
5 reopening early in the New Year as well -- spring,
6 uh, I believe.

7 Uhm, Owen Dolan, in The Bronx, uh, it's kind of
8 going to through two separate capital projects. So,
9 I don't have a timeline for when that second project
10 will be completed, because I believe it's in
11 procurement. So, sometimes that's hard to give an
12 estimate. So, we can get back to you and keep you
13 updated on that.

14 In addition, uhm, as the Commissioner said,
15 there's actually two recreation centers that were
16 damaged by Ida. There were three, but we just opened
17 Saint Mary's yesterday, which was great news.

18 Uhm, Red Hook, uhm, we're installing a temporary
19 boiler, and then hope to have that open when that
20 boiler is in so we have heat.

21 And, then Saint James, uh, had significant
22 flooding in The Bronx. Uhm, and that is going to
23 unfortunately require a whole new replacement of what
24 was unfortunately a fairly new HVAC system. And, we
25

1
2 don't have a timeline yet on kind of how long it will
3 take us to do that capital process.

4 But, again, I think this administration, uhm, has
5 invested a significant amount of money to repairing
6 our aging recreation centers. And, unfortunately
7 sometimes that leads to the public not be able to use
8 those recreation centers while we do this work. But,
9 when they reopen, they will be in a much better place
10 to serve the public for future generations. So,
11 we're excited for the long term of this work.

12 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

13 So, uh, how often are recreation centers
14 inspected to ensure that they are clean and that the
15 equipment's in proper working order? Are they part
16 of the, uh, part of The Inspection Program -- PIP?
17 And, is such data publicly available?

18 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: We, uhm, take several
19 different steps to make sure that our, uhm,
20 recreation centers are well maintained and in a state
21 of good repair and cleanly. Uhm, it is our greatest
22 priority to deliver the quality programming that we
23 do, uh, it requires our facilities to be in a state
24 of good repair, uh, to be clean, and welcoming. So,
25 we do take that of course as our first priority.

1
2 Uhm, and... And, so as I said, we do that in several
3 different ways. There are of course maintenance
4 staff that are assigned to the facilities that are
5 there fulltime, uh, cleaning and maintaining those
6 rec centers. We also do, uh, as to your question, as
7 part of the PIP program that we spoke about in the
8 last hearing, we do a twice-yearly inspection that is
9 the same protocol as the PIP Inspection Program. It
10 is done by the same unit, uh, The Maintain and
11 Operations Planning Division. It is an independent
12 audit, and each rec center... It has a different
13 name, but it is essentially the same program as the
14 Parks Inspection Program. And, that happens twice
15 yearly.

16 We also instituted, and Commissioner Nelson, uh,
17 spoke about this in her testimony, in 2019 began a
18 new program, a Capital Needs Assessment Program. Uh,
19 and this is a program, uh, by the Parks Capital Team,
20 that goes in to each rec center, and, uh, does a full
21 capital needs assessment. We have done nine thus
22 far. And, the first, uh, the first rec center that
23 received this assessment, uh, we worked with OMB to
24 fund, uh, the full range of capital improvements

1
2 needed there -- 20 million dollars at the Ham Fish
3 Rec Center that, uh, Commissioner Nelson spoke about.

4 So, those are some of the, uh, things we do. We
5 also, uh, have a program or an initiative called The
6 Quick Wins, and that is within the rec centers, small
7 projects that we can do with expense funding, uh,
8 that the team at the rec center can address quickly -
9 - new furniture, new front desk, some painting -- for
10 the smaller projects.

11 So, that's the... the broad strokes of our
12 different approaches.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

14 Uhm, for the most... For the most recent fiscal
15 year, 2020, that we have data, the MMR indicates that
16 100 percent of centers were rated as having an
17 acceptable rating for cleanliness, and 90 percent for
18 an acceptable overall condition. Now, can you
19 explain in more detail what the inspection process
20 for recreation centers is? Are they the same as the
21 other PIP Programs?

22 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: We do follow the PIP
23 protocol, but Commissioner Nelson, why don't you give
24 a little more detail?

1
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Sure. Yes, so,
3 that's reporting on what The Commissioner just
4 outlined, which is it's kind of PIP for recreation
5 centers. So, where a PIP is a Parks Inspection
6 Program, RECAP in the Recreation Center Inspection
7 Program. It's done by the same folks. So, they're
8 trained in how to do these independent inspections.
9 And, obviously, what they're looking for in a
10 recreation center, may be different than what they're
11 looking for in a park. Right? So, in a park they're
12 looking at, is there a dangling limb, or is there
13 exposed something -- wiring-- in a recreation center.
14 They're looking for, you know, exit signs,
15 cleanliness, uhm, a big focus is the AEDs in our
16 centers. So, all of our centers have, uhm, the AEDs,
17 and the PIP inspect... Uh, the RECAP Inspectors look
18 to make sure that those are operating and have all of
19 the pieces of equipment they're supposed to have.

20 So, that is what's reported in the MMR, and as
21 you said, uh, you know, we... Before closure, I
22 think we overwhelmingly were, uh, passing those
23 inspections, uh, the data I have, I have it for FY
24 19, uh

1
2 ,you know, again they're all visited twice a
3 year, and, uh, I think six centers failed; the rest
4 of the 34 passed, uhm, and those six that were failed
5 were mostly for AED issues. Uhm, so that is reported
6 to the MMR. And, it's also available on the, uhm,
7 NYC Open Data Portal.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, what factors the determine
9 whether they have (Background Noise) an overall
10 (INAUDIBLE 00:54:11)

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Uhm, again, I don't
12 have their exact... (Cross-Talk)

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Because (INAUDIBLE 00:54:18)

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: methodology... I
15 don't have their exact methodology, we could get it
16 to you, like the actual checklist, uhm, you know, and
17 how much things are weighted, but we get the... The
18 reports, the kind of the roll up reports, uhm, in
19 terms of like the pass/fail.

20 But, we're happy to follow up with your office...
21 (Cross-Talk)

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: and get you more
24 detail about that program certainly.

25 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, yes.

2 For the centers that are currently closed, did
3 they fail any of the inspections?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Uhm, again, my sense
5 is that they probably passed the inspections, so the
6 closures were related to things that were not on the,
7 uh, inspection checklist. But, we can go back and
8 crosswalk that, uhm, to just get a sense. I think
9 your... your sense is like, were things getting
10 flagged that then led to the closure? I think for
11 the most part, our capital inspections are things
12 like... are larger structural issues, which aren't
13 necessarily the kinds of things that the RECAP
14 Inspections are looking at. I think the RECAP
15 Inspections are much more like health and safety
16 violations, cleanliness, uh, they don't... They
17 don't evaluate structural conditions, like, is the
18 roof old, is... you know leaking and needs to be
19 replaced? And, then that becomes a capital project
20 if that's helpful.

21 But, we can certainly go back and check and get
22 you the statistics for the RECAP for the centers that
23 are now closed.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thanks.
25

2 So, what is the process that The Parks use to
3 bring a recreation center back up to cleanliness
4 standards when it does not meet standards during an
5 inspection?

6 So, how do you... What's the process to bring it
7 up to their cleanliness standard?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you. Uhm, you
9 know, I think once we get the report, uhm, then we
10 have center managers, we have Chiefs of Recreation,
11 we have a whole kind of structure that makes sure
12 we're looking at the results of the report and taking
13 action.

14 I would like to also say that our center
15 managers, who are on site every day, you know, one of
16 their jobs is to kind of walk through the center on a
17 daily basis and check for cleanliness. And, I think
18 that especially as we reopened our centers, uh, in
19 ,you know, June and in the summer, our staff were
20 very, very careful and conscientious to really bring
21 the centers back at a whole new kind of higher
22 standard even of cleanliness that we had before ,
23 because of the concern about COVID. So, we, you
24 know, we made sure we had maintain staff. We made
25 sure we're doing regular cleaning. Uhm, we had

1 definitely COVID safety protocols. So, I just...
2
3 I... I commend our staff for developing the
4 protocols to bring our recreation centers back safely
5 for the public, and make sure they are meeting, uh,
6 you know, a high level of cleanliness.

7 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thanks.

8 So, uhm, who develops and implements, uh, the
9 many different types of programming at the centers?

10 Uh, do individual centers have their own authority
11 over programming, or does Parks take on a more hands
12 on role?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, uhm, so,
14 basically the centers have a lot of flexibility to
15 develop their own programming. Uhm, they develop
16 program schedules in advance of, you know, we kind of
17 set things in to quarters or thirds or different kind
18 of sections of the year. So, you'll have folks who
19 are in a center who might propose different kinds of
20 programming or maybe that programming has existed in
21 the past and has been very successful. So, they'll
22 develop a tentative schedule that will be discussed
23 with the supervision, which are The Recreation Chiefs
24 for each of the boroughs. Uhm, and then they go all
25 the way up to The Assistant Commissioner, Emily Chase

1
2 and myself; although, I don't tend to get involved in
3 very detailed, uh, programming decisions -- although
4 I like to, I think, overall as a division we try to
5 look at making sure we have a diversity of
6 programming, that we're serving different, uh, ages,
7 that we're serving different interests. I think we
8 try to make sure that as we see kind of new, uhm, new
9 programs or new interests in certain kinds of sports
10 or activities, we try to meet that demand. We
11 certainly are open to member suggestions about what
12 they would like to see. I think we engage with
13 elected officials about what they would like to see.
14 So, for example, as Pickle Ball has become more
15 popular, uhm, ,you know, our rec centers were kind of
16 in the forefront of using gym space to create some
17 time for Pickle Ball. And, now we're creating more
18 outdoor sites as... When we closed our recreation
19 centers and people were still looking to play Pickle
20 Ball outside, so now we have more outdoor Pickle Ball
21 courts. So, I think it's a very, uh, dynamic
22 process. Uhm, I think we provide a lot of really
23 great, uh, variety of programming. But, certainly if
24 any of you here have ideas, or you hear from your
25

1
2 constituents about some sort of gap in programming,
3 we would love to hear from you.

4 And, I would say that, you know, as we are
5 restarting we are also trying to be careful, uh,
6 given the COVID safety protocols, to not, uhm, over
7 schedule or create crowding conditions. So, I think
8 we're in the process of kind of ramping up a public
9 programming schedule, in a careful way, so that we
10 don't have too many people in the center at once to
11 be able to maintain that social distancing, which is,
12 uh, recommended at this time. So, that's another
13 consideration. So, while we might... (Cross-Talk)

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: open a center, and
16 people can use the different rooms, it might not be
17 as programmed as yet, as it was in the past.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, for individuals who are,
19 like, experts on some kinds of activities, say an
20 individual was very good in tai chi, and if they want
21 to offer to teach that skill to a local recreation
22 center, do they approach the local center or do...
23 would they approach the central office?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Uhm, I think either
25 way would be fine. Uhm, and certainly you should

1
2 feel free to, uh, have people do that. I think we
3 have to... We have certain volunteer standards. We
4 just... You know, people would have to go through a
5 background check. There's certain rules about having
6 volunteers in our buildings working with children.
7 So, it's a careful process. Uhm, and, you know,
8 usually we rely on our own staff to do official
9 programming. But, we're always open to partnering
10 with organizations traditionally, uhm, you know, and
11 volunteers. So, I wouldn't want to say, no, I would
12 want to say, we're certainly open to exploring that.
13 And, in fact, we... We probably have some examples
14 of that. I just don't have that in front of me to
15 share today. But, I can get back to you on that...
16 (Cross-Talk)

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So... So, okay. So, all of the
18 instructors, uh, of activities, are they staff at The
19 Parks Department? Are they regular staff? Or, they
20 are like contracted... (Cross-Talk)

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yeah, so,
22 primarily... No, primarily all of our programs
23 offered at our recreation centers, or the vast
24 majority are done by our own staff. Uh, we have
25 recreation specialist, we have recreation

1 supervisors, you know, different folks who are
2 trained, uhm, and knowledgeable that had to put
3 together a curriculum, and had to deliver a
4 curriculum of all sorts of different types of
5 programming.
6

7 We also do, as I said in my testimony, partner
8 with organizations, and ,you know, we'll partner
9 together to create some programs that maybe we
10 couldn't offer on our own or an organization is
11 interested in working with us to offer to the public.
12 But, in any partnership, uh, with an organization
13 that comes in, it would have to be, you know, open to
14 all of our recreation center members, it would have
15 to be free, it becomes part of our programming. We
16 don't rent out our space to organizations for them to
17 do their own programing in.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, those are strictly
19 volunteers, right? You don't pay them for outside
20 people to who come in to teach?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Right. Usually our
22 partnerships, like, you know, we have a partnership
23 with The Public Theater, we have a partnership with
24 the... Hold on, I think I have a list here. Uhm,
25 you know, we have... Mostly it's an organization

1
2 looking to partner with us and providing free
3 programming. Uhm, so, there are some cases where
4 will pay for programming, uh, because we're doing it
5 in partnership with an organization, so they might...
6 So, for example, like, The Jazz Foundation of
7 America, ,you know, where we have a partnership with
8 them, and they will provide ,you know, I think it's
9 like ,you know, about ten free concerts during the
10 year, but there might be a few other concerts that we
11 help subsidize ,you know, to get those few extra
12 concerts. So, it's primarily, we're not paying
13 organizations to come in and do programming, they're,
14 ,you know, it's partnership where they're bringing
15 the programming, and it's an added ,you know, extra,
16 great opportunities for our members to experience
17 different kinds or programming.

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, uh, are staff at recreation
19 centers able to communicate in multiple languages to
20 serve their local communities? I have heard stories
21 of New Yorkers not able to participate in center
22 activities, uh, due to language barriers. You know?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think we... We
24 definitely strive, uh, we have a very diverse
25 workforce in our Public Programs and Recreation

1
2 Division, so I do think we have a lot of, uh,
3 programs where the, uh, instructor can speak more
4 than one language. But, again, I think it's
5 something that we should always kind of look at doing
6 kind of more of where we can. I mean, so, if you
7 have ideas or you certainly hear of any specific
8 concerns for a center, we would be totally interested
9 in working with you to see what more can be done at
10 that center.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Sure, yes, because, like say for
12 example of Flushing, right, more than half of the
13 populations here are Asians, you know? So, you would
14 be better if you have staff that speaks, like,
15 Mandarin, or Korean, you know, to help the local
16 people, especially senior citizens where they want
17 them to come to participate. Uh, they don't speak
18 the language, so they don't want to come. But, if
19 you speak the language, of course they will come.

20 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Certainly, I think we
21 agree with that... (Cross-Talk)

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: importance and focus, that
24 that... We'd be... We'd like to discuss that more
25 with you, and we agree of that importance for sure.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, so, this is simple, it
3 doesn't... For someone who is a member of one
4 recreation center, does that give them access to all
5 centers or only once specific center? When you sign
6 up, is it only one center, or they can go to all
7 centers?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, we have two
9 general kinds of membership. We have a membership
10 that allows access to all recreation centers but that
11 don't have a pool. And, so for adults that's a \$100
12 a year. And, then, there's a membership that allows
13 you access to all recreation centers, including those
14 with a pool, and that is a \$150 a year. But, again,
15 remember, most people are paying far less that,
16 that's just for the strictly adult population.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. So, I have a local
18 question. (INAUDIBLE 01:06:58)

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: And, we think that's
20 a very...

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I have... (INAUDIBLE 01:07:00)
22 enough. I mean, it's a fair price, yeah, yeah. For
23 seniors, it's much cheaper, right? It's \$20... \$25
24 or something, yeah.
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Exactly, I mean,
3 again... (Cross-Talk)

4 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: \$25, yes...

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: a \$150 for access to
6 any recreation center in, you know, in the city that
7 has a pool or not a pool, is a... we think is a
8 great deal ,you know, it's a great bargain, it's a
9 great deal, we think we give great programming. And,
10 again, I think as you referenced in your testimony,
11 when that increase went in to effect in 2011, that
12 did have a drop in our membership, but I think, you
13 know, now that price has held for the past 10 years,
14 you know, inflation has actually made that price a
15 lot less than it was when that was first implemented.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Right.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, uhm, again...
18 (Cross-Talk)

19 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: And, we do offer...

20 (Cross-Talk)

21 CHAIRPERSON KOO: (INAUDIBLE 1:07:45)

22 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: for, (INAUDIBLE 01:07:48)
23 uh... Oh, I'm sorry, Chair, we... We do offer a
24 discount as well, uh, with IDNYC. Uhm... (Cross-
25 Talk)

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Mm-hmm

COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Uh, to the regular membership as well.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: And, now it's free before the end of the year, right? If you sign up now...

(Cross-Talk)

COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, I'll probably go after this hearing. Let's sign up (LAUGHING).

COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Yes!

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Yes, please help us... You know, please help us get the word out. I think that would be really helpful, because...

(Cross-Talk)

CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Again, knowing, you know, people were just kind of... The pandemic, I think is, you know, a lot of people aren't necessarily ready to come indoors for programming, but now is the time to get that free membership. Uhm, even if you know you're going to wait a month or two to start coming indoors for your recreation, uh, we definitely want to get that word out, and would appreciate the council's help on that.

2 CHAIRPERSON KOO: So, uh, the question is, uh,
3 particularly local to our residents around here.

4 So, every year during the US Open, the USTA is
5 allowed to make use of the parking areas adjacent to
6 the Flushing Meadow pools and rink, uh, which is used
7 by many members in my district while utilizing the
8 recreation center. So, during the two weeks of the
9 US Open, they are not allowed access to this area,
10 uh, to park their vehicles. I think this is really
11 unfair to these city residents, and would like to
12 know how the city can address the problem.

13 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: We would be happy to
14 discuss that with you further and find a solution for
15 everyone. We'll make a note and circle back on that,
16 if that's okay, Chair Koo?

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Sure, sure, yeah, okay. Yeah,
18 we'll talk offline.

19 So, are all recreation centers, that meet The
20 Parks Department definition, run solely by Parks
21 Department? Are there any recreation facilities that
22 are essentially operating as a concession? And, does
23 Parks consider such facilities to be recreation
24 centers?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: I can take this. I
3 think.

4 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: You got it.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Uhm, so, when we
6 talk about our 36 recreation centers, those are all
7 centers that we own the buildings, and we are running
8 as The Parks Department.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Mm-hmm

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: I think there are
11 some legacy buildings that are owned by The Parks
12 Department that other organization are running, uhm,
13 as recreation centers or community service
14 facilities. It's only a few. I think we can get you
15 that list. Uhm, I think there might also be, you
16 know, again our Concessions or Revenue Division, also
17 runs concessions and, uhm, other programming that
18 people -- organizations -- compete to have that
19 concession. And, then they offer fee-based
20 programming out of certain buildings or, you know,
21 ten... You know, we tennis centers, we have other
22 kinds of recreational facilities, uh, that are run by
23 organizations that have an agreement with us to do
24 that.

25 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay... (Cross-Talk)

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, for example, we
3 have a building in The Bronx, uhm, in Mullaly Park,
4 uh, that is a building that is, uh, we have a license
5 agreement with a nonprofit organization, I believe
6 it's SCAN, uh, and they run a series of programs in
7 that building, uhm, and... But, we don't call it our
8 recreation center.

9 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thank you.

10 So, what is the... (Cross-Talk)

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: I hope that answers
12 your question.

13 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes, yes, yes.

14 What is the Americans with Disabilities, uh, ADA,
15 combines workers for, uh, recreation centers? Uh,
16 how do they rate when it comes to overall disability,
17 uh, access? Uh, were all centers... (Cross-Talk)

18 UNKNOWN: (INAUDIBLE 01:11:57)

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: ADA combined?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: So, all of our
21 centers, uh, are ADA accessible to get in the
22 building, to get up to the building, uhm, many of
23 them have elevators. I think what's important to...
24 And, we are constantly looking to increase our
25

1
2 accessibility, uh, in to all spaces in our recreation
3 centers for members.

4 But, ADA accessibility, really kicks in when you
5 are doing a renovation, and as we all know, many of
6 our centers are so old, right? So, they are... Are
7 compliant with whatever regulations exists those
8 buildings. But, when they go through a renovation,
9 they would have to be then ADA compliant to the new
10 standards. But, again, it's something The Parks
11 Department feels very strongly about. We have a, you
12 know, an ADA Compliance Officer. We are always
13 working to make improvements to our parks and our
14 comfort stations and our recreation centers and other
15 public facing facilities to make them as accessible
16 as possible.

17 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

18 I think I have finished my questions. I will ask
19 other members of this committee to ask questions.

20 Uh, Kris, uh, I am going to turn this over to
21 you, and you will call on members who use the sign
22 up, uh, the hand sign up thing to, uhm, to ask
23 questions.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
25

1
2 At this point, I would ask any Council Members
3 who wish to ask a question, to be please use the Zoom
4 Raise Hand Function if you have a question for any
5 representative of The Parks Department.

6 At this point, Chair, there are no other members
7 who have any questions, so we can turn it back to you
8 if you have additional questions, or we can move on
9 to testimony from members of the public who have
10 registered to speak.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Uh, I think we can move to
12 public testimony.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, very well.

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, very well, thank you,
16 Chair. Thank you... (Cross-Talk)

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER NELSON: Thank you... (Cross-
18 Talk)

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Commissioner
20 Fialkoff. Thank you Commissioner Nelson... (Cross-
21 Talk)

22 COMMISSIONER FIALKOFF: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Director Drury.
24 Thank you.

2 As the Chair mentioned, we will now hear
3 testimony from members of the public who have
4 registered to speak.

5 And, as I've also previously mentioned, unlike
6 our typical council hearings, we will be calling on
7 individuals one by one to testify, and each panelist
8 will be given three minutes to speak.

9 Uh, so begin once the Sergeant At Arms has
10 started the timer and given you the cue to begin.

11 Council Members who have question for a
12 particular panelist, should also use the Zoom Raise
13 Hand Function, and I will call on you in order.

14 At this point, we hear from testimony first from,
15 uh, Sherrise Palomino of New Yorkers for Parks,
16 followed by Neile Weissman.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 SHERRISE PALOMINO: Okay, good afternoon, my name
19 is Sherrise Palomino, and I am The Director of
20 Advocacy and Programs at New Yorkers for Parks. We
21 are a founding member of the Play Fair for Parks
22 Coalition, which includes over 400 organizations from
23 across the five boroughs, many of whom will testify
24 today.

2 Thank you to the City Council Committee on Parks
3 and Recreation for inviting us to speak about our
4 city's recreation opportunities and centers.

5 I would also like to take the time to thank Chair
6 Koo for his leadership and his partnership in the
7 Play Fair Coalition and for raising these important
8 issues.

9 The New York City Parks Department operates and
10 maintains 59 recreation centers across the city to
11 serve a population of over eight million people. Of
12 the 59 community board districts, 26 don't have a New
13 York City Parks recreation center within it, meaning
14 that 44% of community boards do not have a recreation
15 center.

16 New York City's recreation centers used to serve
17 as community centers with programs for youth and
18 seniors alike. Unfortunately, New York City's network
19 of recreation centers never recovered from the steep
20 cuts to the Parks Department in the 1970's and '80'S.
21 They should provide critical opportunities for youth
22 development and empowerment with free programming and
23 sports, and they should provide older adults
24 opportunities to socialize and be active, which is
25 essential to their overall well-being. Instead, New

1
2 York City's recreation centers are chronically under-
3 staffed and badly in need of repairs, with roughly
4 one-third of them closed at any given time.

5 Now is the time for transformative investment in
6 our parks system - 1% of the city budget for Parks
7 could ensure that recreation centers are fully
8 staffed and functioning to provide the programming
9 that New Yorkers need.

10 The New York City Parks Department does a valiant
11 job maintaining these aging resources but needs more
12 funding to do so. This is one of the many reasons why
13 New Yorkers for Parks and the Play Fair for Parks
14 Coalition are calling for an increase in the Parks
15 budget to 1% of the city's budget - a call that the
16 majority of incoming city council members -- and
17 current council members -- support along with the
18 incoming Mayor.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Uh, thank you, uh,
21 we will now move on to our next panelist, uh, who is,
22 uh, Neile Weissman, who will be followed by Jessica
23 Burke.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

1
2 NEILE WEISSMAN: Uh, good afternoon, uh, thank you
3 for the opportunities to speak. My name is Neile
4 Weissman, I head up Complete George, 200
5 organizations and communities calling on the Port
6 Authority to widen bike paths across The George
7 Washington Bridge. I'm also a past president of New
8 York Cycle Club.

9 Uh, today, I would introduce Grayways proposal to
10 connect city parks with 500 miles of recreational
11 bike ways. My extended remarks, uh, which I've
12 submitted, include 15 suggested routes through the
13 four boroughs, plus a drafted council resolution.

14 Uh, Grayways aggregates separated paths, on road
15 bike lanes, low volume secondary roads, and low
16 traffic industrial areas. Destinations feature local
17 food stops and nearby parks to facilitate outdoor
18 dining.

19 The Grayways proposal supports core park
20 initiatives. By highlighting scenic vistas and
21 landmark neighborhoods, uh, we blur the boundaries
22 between parks and their environs, which is the
23 objective of Parks Without Borders.

24 Like Walk to the Park, Grayways enhances resident
25 access to green space, not just to local parks but to

1 facilities throughout the city, including marquee
2 projects funded by the Community Parks Initiative.
3 And, in so doing, it will help reduce disparities in
4 park funding by expanding the constituency for each
5 facility.
6

7 Collateral beneficiaries include the city's
8 800,000 cyclists who have few venues to ride that are
9 not crowded by pedestrians and runners, and
10 neighborhood food vendors can see in a surge in
11 customers.

12 Grayways can be implemented quickly and cheaply
13 by hosting GPS data on the DOT website. As routes
14 gain acceptance, they can be upgraded with safety
15 improvements and signage.

16 What's needed is for the council to make the ask.
17 I welcome the opportunity to do an extended
18 presentation.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Jessica Burke, who will be
23 followed by... pardon me for one second... who will
24 be followed by Michael Schnall.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 JESSICA BURKE: I am the President at Friends of
3 Crocheron & John Golden Park. We help NYC Parks with
4 stewardship of the 12th largest park in Queens,
5 Crocheron Park. It is over 60 acres large, and it
6 includes John Golden Park, O'Rourke Playground, and
7 Golden Pond.

8 As a park in north east Queens, we do not have
9 any recreation centers in our district. The closest
10 one is 4.6 miles away in downtown Flushing. There is
11 a nearby pool in Flushing, but at an initial
12 investment of 67 million dollars, it is now crumbling
13 and closed since January 2020.

14 In place of recreation centers, our district and
15 community utilizes outdoor parks. NYC Parks works
16 with private partners to bring outdoor recreation to
17 the parks. This is not done in equal ways. Senior
18 fitness programs that should ideally be held in areas
19 with higher populations and percentages of seniors
20 are not, and instead are held in areas with
21 established conservancies or friends of groups.

22 We are grateful to the funding that Council
23 Member Vallone and city council, Speaker Johnson have
24 provided for programming in our parks. This includes
25 Movies Under the Stars. Sometimes events that are

1
2 within the parks, such as The Play Mobile seemed to
3 be planned at the last minute. This means that
4 established groups like mine are not told until about
5 48 hours before the event.

6 Our group has been able to work with our park
7 administrator to bring a yoga instructor to our park.
8 This only happened because our group had ongoing
9 programming and had started a relationship with one
10 of the yoga instructors. She was excited about
11 bringing programming to the park, and it's something
12 that our group was able to do. This honestly is at a
13 bit of risk to a small group like ours, as we do not
14 have insurance. Once again, there is a
15 public/private partnership that New York City Parks
16 has where you can obtain grants to pay for yoga
17 instructors, but these grants do not really provide
18 everything that this small group needs.

19 This is why we're looking to have more
20 programming in parks that is administered by New York
21 City Parks.

22 We are lucky that our park administrator put the
23 yoga instructor in touch with New York City Parks,
24 and she is currently working with them to become a
25

1
2 yoga instructor through New York City Parks Summer
3 Fitness Program.

4 Thank you very much for your time, and thank you
5 to everyone at New York City Parks for your ongoing
6 work and dedication to fitness and outdoor recreation
7 in our community.

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, and thank you for
9 your testimony.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

11 Our next speaker is Michael Schnall, who will be
12 followed by David Small.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 MICHAEL SCHNALL: Uh, good afternoon, my name is
15 Mike Schnall; I'm here submitting testimony on behalf
16 of my colleague David Ludwig who serves as The Senior
17 Director of Community Programs & Governmental Affairs
18 for Asphalt Green.

19 Uh, if he was here, he would say, Thank you for
20 this opportunity to testify before the Committee on
21 Parks & Recreation on access to recreational programs
22 and facilities.

23 Asphalt Green is a nonprofit organization
24 committed to providing access to sports and fitness
25 opportunities for all New Yorkers. And, as a

1
2 nonprofit, they foster a love of physical activity
3 with a focus on providing positive experiences in
4 sports and fitness for young people to develop skills
5 and habits that will help them lead healthy, active
6 lives.

7 Asphalt Green manages a multi-million budget with
8 500+ employees across their two Manhattan campuses
9 where they operate world-class aquatics, sports, and
10 fitness programs to which we ensure access through
11 over \$400,000 in annual scholarships.

12 We extend our reach beyond the campuses through a
13 variety of free community programs that impact tens
14 of thousands of children in low income neighborhoods
15 across New York City.

16 These include Waterproofing, a large swim program
17 that has taught 35,000 public school second graders
18 to swim since 1994; Recess Enhancement Program, which
19 ensures daily physical activity for tens of thousands
20 of children; and Community Sports Leagues, which
21 gives 750 children per year the chance to represent
22 their school in sports teams.

23 The world needs sports and fitness now more than
24 ever. The Aspen Institute recently released physical
25 activity trends during the pandemic and found youth

1
2 of all ages are half as active as they were prior to
3 the pandemic.

4 As New York City continues to reopen, Asphalt
5 Greens vision is to rebuild our community impact to
6 pre-pandemic levels, and beyond.

7 We are excited by the possibility of providing
8 world-class athletic programming in parks across the
9 entire city. And, as the next Mayoral administration
10 takes shape, we'll be talking with our partners at
11 New York City's Parks & Recreation, Department of
12 Education, and individual council members to
13 determine how and where Asphalt Green can make the
14 most impact in the neediest communities.

15 I also just want to say a shout out to Sherrise
16 Palomino and the folks at New Yorkers for Parks and
17 the incredible work they're doing.

18 And, uh, thank you for the time to testify today.

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you for your service.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

21 Our next speaker is David Small, who will be
22 followed by Jacqui Painter.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 DAVID SMALL: Yes, hello?

25 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Hi.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, go ahead... (Cross-Talk)

3 DAVID SMALL: Hi, oh, okay, I'm new at this.

4 Okay, this is David Small a resident of Red Hook,
5 Brooklyn.

6 Our recreation center has been closed for over a
7 year since the start of the pandemic, and we have the
8 free membership, on what you were just talking about
9 a while ago, to sign up, which I did. And, being
10 that I am a retired (INAUDIBLE 01:26:15) for health
11 reasons, the recreation is very important, because I
12 can't walk as good, and I cannot stand up on my feet.
13 So, my doctor, my physician, doesn't want us sitting
14 in the house, but we've been sitting and we have
15 nowhere else to go other than the recreation center -
16 - and it's been closed for almost close to two years.
17 So, when we finally did get to sign up, now they say
18 because of Ida, which happened in August, I believe,
19 late August, that the gym is... they don't have any
20 heating, and they are waiting on a boiler, and I want
21 to know how long does it have to take to get the
22 temporary boiler fixed up there... put in there?
23 And, basically, we have to travel to Sunset Park,
24 which is two busses, and really it's a long ride on
25 the bus. And, then you have to walk up a hill to get

1
2 to the facility -- two long blocks. And, you know,
3 we just want to know how long we have to wait to get
4 this Red Hook Recreation Center open. It's very key
5 to the area and to the community as well. We need
6 answers, and we're not getting the answers that we
7 need. We're just getting runaround, or "I don't
8 know."

9 So, it would be very helpful if you all could
10 give us definite timelines, when does it need to be
11 opened -- that it has already been closed for
12 approximately almost two years at the start of the
13 pandemic?

14 And, thank you, and, uh, I appreciate everything
15 you all are doing today.

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you, we will forward your
17 question to The Parks Department, and get an answer
18 to you by email.

19 DAVID SMALL: Okay, thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

22 Our next, uh, speaker, who is currently our last
23 registered speaker, is Jacqui Painter.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

2 JACQUI PAINTER: Hello everyone, and thank you for
3 the opportunity to speak.

4 Thank you to the Chair, and thank you to the
5 committee for all of your work.

6 I am also a resident of Red Hook. I am the
7 founder of Red Hook Relief, a mutual aid
8 organization, and a formal city council candidate for
9 District 38.

10 I also want to speak on the importance of Red
11 Hook Recreation Center. As I am sure a lot of you
12 know, Red Hook is very, very prone to floods, to
13 devastation, uhm, not only Hurricane Sandy, but now
14 we have our rec center closed, because of a
15 hurricane. And, honestly it's extremely sad that
16 we're not putting... that the city isn't putting in
17 the money to invest in a low income community like
18 Red Hook.

19 In the past two years, because of construction,
20 the neighborhood of Red Hook has lost over 457 trees,
21 our outdoor parks have been closed because of toxic
22 soil levels, and we have last-mile trucking
23 facilities popping up all throughout the waterfront
24 in our neighborhood.

1
2 So, we need this recreation center now more than
3 ever, especially as my neighbor, who previously spoke
4 just mentioned, with this free membership, it is
5 going... Well, it would have really helped out our
6 neighborhood. It really would have helped out our
7 seniors. As mentioned before in this meeting, as
8 well, their gym memberships are actually pretty
9 pricy, and the city offers these rec center gym
10 memberships at a super affordable price. That's
11 very, very important to keeping a neighborhood and a
12 community healthy, especially one with a very high
13 asthmatic rate like Red Hook. And, like, previously
14 mentioned, they want to forward people on to the
15 Sunset Park Recreation Center, which takes about an
16 hour to an hour and a half to get to from the Red
17 Hook Recreation Center, and it's pretty much
18 impossible for anyone with mobility issues or who may
19 be elderly.

20 I want to implore, implore, implore the city
21 council to please continue funding these centers.
22 Please make sure there is money in this budget to
23 repair this boiler in the Red Hook Recreation Center,
24 and, uhm, continue this amazing service that we have
25

1
2 -- that's needed now after COVID, more than it's ever
3 been needed before.

4 Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay. Yeah, we'll do it, yes.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you very much.

7 Uh, I do see we have a question from Council
8 Member Holden.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, uhm, Jacqui,
10 uh, can we... Can I ask you a question about, uhm,
11 the Red Hook, uh, Recreation Center?

12 What is Parks telling you about the renovations
13 or, uhm, when it will be back online, the rec center?

14 JACQUI PAINTER: Yeah, uhm, well, what we're
15 hearing right now is that there isn't enough money to
16 replace the boiler, and that's most likely just going
17 to be closed, uhm, in our neighborhood. And, there's
18 a big possibility that it will be closed
19 indefinitely, uhm, because as they were... have
20 looked, I guess, at the repairs of the boiler, they
21 have also noticed some other repairs from the
22 flooding that need to be made.

23 Uhm, so that's all we... That's really all we
24 know right now. And, no one was really informed of
25

1
2 its closure. We all just kind of found out last
3 week.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDER: Oh, Chair, we should get
5 some answers to that... these questions as to when,
6 and how much, and these... These are important.
7 We're not going to just give up on that rec center
8 are we? So, I think, uh, is anybody on from Parks
9 that could answer, uh, Jacqui's question?

10 Counsel, is anybody on... (Cross-Talk)

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah, yeah, we will do that.
12 Yes, we will, uh... (Cross-Talk)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But... But... But,
14 Chair, they did, uhm, did Parks leave any
15 representative on this call?

16 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yes, they have representatives.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, can we can an
18 answer... (Cross-Talk)

19 CHAIRPERSON KOO: On (INAUDIBLE 01:32:27)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Can we... Can they answer
21 us?

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: I don't know if they access
23 (INAUDIBLE 01:32:31)... (Cross-Talk)

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: They are currently not on the
25 Zoom call, uh, Council Member (INAUDIBLE 01:32:34)

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, nobody from Parks is
3 on the Zoom call? They couldn't leave somebody to
4 hear the advocates?

5 CHAIRPERSON KOO: They're watching it, yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: They're watching, but can
7 they answer?

8 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: What... You know, that's
10 important.

11 No? Okay.

12 Uh, well, Jacqui, I'm very sorry that Parks did
13 not have a representative that can... (Cross-Talk)

14 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Yeah

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: answer a question. But,
16 uh, we'll try to, you know, Chair, we'll try to get
17 that... That answer right away, and... (Cross-Talk)

18 CHAIRPERSON KOO: We will get the question... We
19 will get the answer for you, yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, thank you.
21 Thanks, Chair. Thank you, Jacqui... (Cross-Talk)

22 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Okay, thank you.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, David.

24 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Mm-hmm

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, uhm, Jacqui was...
3 Jacqui Painter was our last registered panelist.
4 But, uh, so as of now, if there are any panelist who
5 had signed up to testify, who have not been called,
6 please us the Zoom Raise Hand Function, and I'll call
7 on you to speak.

8 There are none at this point, so I will turn it
9 back to Chair Koo to offer any closing remarks and to
10 adjourn the hearing.

11 CHAIRPERSON KOO: Thank you. Thank you very much.

12 Uh, so, this our last Parks Committee Oversight
13 hearing of the season. And, I want to take the time
14 to thank my committee staff for two years, uh,
15 especially Kris Sartori, our moderator today, Patrick
16 Mulvihill, Chima Obichere, and Monika Bujak.

17 Thank you also to our data team, Nate and Rose,
18 our Community Engagement liaison, Frank Paris, our
19 Land Use liaison, Chelsea Kelley, and our Press
20 liaison, Walter Chi. Thank you also to the council's
21 infrastructure divisor leadership, including Hasan
22 (INAUDIBLE 01:34:34) and to Jeff Baker, the council's
23 Legislative Director, and also to Megan Chang and
24 Laura (INAUDIBLE 01:34:44) who have since left the
25 council. And, of course, thank you to all you, all of

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

the advocates. Uh, none of these hearings would have been possible without the great work that all of you do, and continue to do behind the scene.

Everyone, thank you to everyone for all you have done on behalf of our city.

With that, I will close this meeting. **[GAVEL]**

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 13, 2022